



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

May 26, 1999

H.R. 1523 **Forest Roads-Community Right-To-Know Act**

As ordered reported by the House Committee on Resources on May 5, 1999

H.R. 1523 would require the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior to notify the public in advance about proposals to permanently close forest roads on federal land. The bill would apply to any road on federal land within the National Forest System or administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The bill would prohibit closing a road for more than a year (except for emergency road closures) unless the agencies provide advance notice according to the process specified in the bill. Such notice would have to include information on traffic patterns and volumes for the previous five years on the roads proposed for closure. According to the Forest Service (FS) and BLM, information on road usage is collected only for major roads on federal land. Therefore, enacting H.R. 1523 would effectively prohibit most permanent road closures for five years while the agencies collect such data.

The delay of most permanent road closures would save decommissioning costs during the period when roads would remain in use or be closed only temporarily. At the same time, the FS and BLM would incur additional costs for maintaining roads that otherwise would be closed under current law and for collecting data on use of the roads that are proposed for permanent closure. Based on information from the two agencies, CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 1523 would have no significant net impact on outlays over the next five years because funds intended for road decommissioning could be used to cover maintenance and data collection. That is, we expect that the likely savings and costs of the bill would be approximately equal over the next five years. However, over the long term, collecting data on road usage would entail additional costs relative to current law.

Because H.R. 1523 would not affect direct spending or receipts, pay-as-you-go procedures would not apply. H.R. 1523 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would have no significant impact on the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

The CBO contact for this estimate is Victoria Heid Hall. This estimate was approved by Robert A. Sunshine, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.